

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Senate Amendment-AB 371-Bear Hunting Regulations

Good morning, Chair Holperin and members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee. My name is Ralph Fritsch, I am from Townsend, Wisconsin and I am Chair of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation's Wildlife Committee.

The Federation is appearing in opposition to the proposed amendment to AB 371. The amendment does not solve the serious hunter user conflict problems that would result from the bill as amended.

To explain our testimony, I would like to share who the Wildlife Federation is. We are made up of 168 hunting, fishing, trapping and forestry-related organizations in the state. As far as this bill is concerned, we do not represent just one narrow form of hunting. Our members are bear hunting houndsmen, bear hunting bait sitters, grouse hunters, archery deer hunters, fall turkey hunters and overall general small game hunters. When we study legislation like AB 371, we look at its broad application to all fall hunters and are sensitive to how proposed hunting regulation changes affect all hunters not just one specific group seeking changes in hunting regulations. We all need to get along together and respect each others hunting seasons.

The bill as amended would be detrimental to the 70% of bear hunters in Wisconsin who are strictly bait sitters, the scores of thousands of archery deer hunters and the scores of thousands of small game hunters in the state.

Specifically, the amendment would provide that during the 2011 and 2012 bear baiting season there would be the increased disturbance to bear bait hunters that will arise from the significant increase of hounds in the woods because of hound training. If you are one of those bear bait hunters who waited eight or nine years to get a Class A kill permit, you will be very angry when the training hounds run the bear off your bait. At the last hearing you heard the opposition of archery deer hunters who were very concerned about the impact of additional hounds running the woods when they are in their tree stands. Having this additional interference limited to 2011 and 2012 will still seriously affect their archery hunting for two years.

The additional two days added to the bear baiting season for 2011 and 2012 does little if anything to offset the lost hunting opportunities for bait sitters. The first of the two days added each year is Labor Day, one of busiest recreational days in the forests of Wisconsin. The tens of thousands of bikers, hikers and campers in the forest on Labor Day will be very disruptive to bait sitting for bear. On Labor Day there will also be the inherent conflict of hunters and the large number of nonhunters trying to recreate in the same areas.

So at best, the loss of hunting opportunity for bait sitters from the additional hound running would be one day of additional hunting. For the loss of hunting opportunity for archery deer hunters and small game hunters, there is no benefit, just loss.

Wisconsin is blessed with abundant numbers and species of game animals and hundreds of thousands of various types of hunters. Virtually all of the hunting in Wisconsin takes place in the months of September, October and November. The current fall hunting seasons have been carefully crafted over the years to provide the greatest opportunity for the maximum number of hunters while trying to avoid significant user conflicts between different methods and seasons of hunters. Assembly Bill 371 and its proposed amendment will break down that system and is likely to lead to the major hunting and land owner conflicts that we had in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the running of bear hounds. Please do not let that happen.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify here today.

Ralph Fritsch, Chair
Wildlife Committee
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

April 1, 2010

Wisconsin Conservation Congress
Wisconsin Bowhunters Association
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

March 23, 2010

Senator Jim Holpein
Senator Dave Hansen
Senator Jeff Plale
Senator Jim Sullivan

Senator Joe Leibham
Senator Neal Kedzie
Senator Grothman

Dear Senate Natural Resources Committee:

Assembly Bill 371 relating to the hunting of bear in the state is currently before your committee. A committee meeting has been held and there was testimony on opposite sides of the bill by several sportsmen.

The Conservation Congress Spring Hearings will be held on April 12th in every county in the state. It can be anticipated that there will be anywhere from 7,000 to 10,000 hunters, anglers and trappers at the spring hearings indicating their perspective on various different issues. The bear hunting regulations contained in AB 371 are on this years' Congress list of questions and will be voted on in each county. After that hearing we will know what the majority of Wisconsin sportsmen and women think about the specific provisions of AB 371.

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress, the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation respectfully request that the Senate Natural Resources Committee wait and hold its vote on AB 371 after it has the results of the spring hearings. This will enable the committee to act on the bill with the knowledge of the wishes of the Wisconsin hunters, anglers and trappers from throughout the state.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Ed Harvey, Chair
Wisconsin Conservation Congress

Wright Allen, President
Wisconsin Bowhunters Association

Jack Nissen, President
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation